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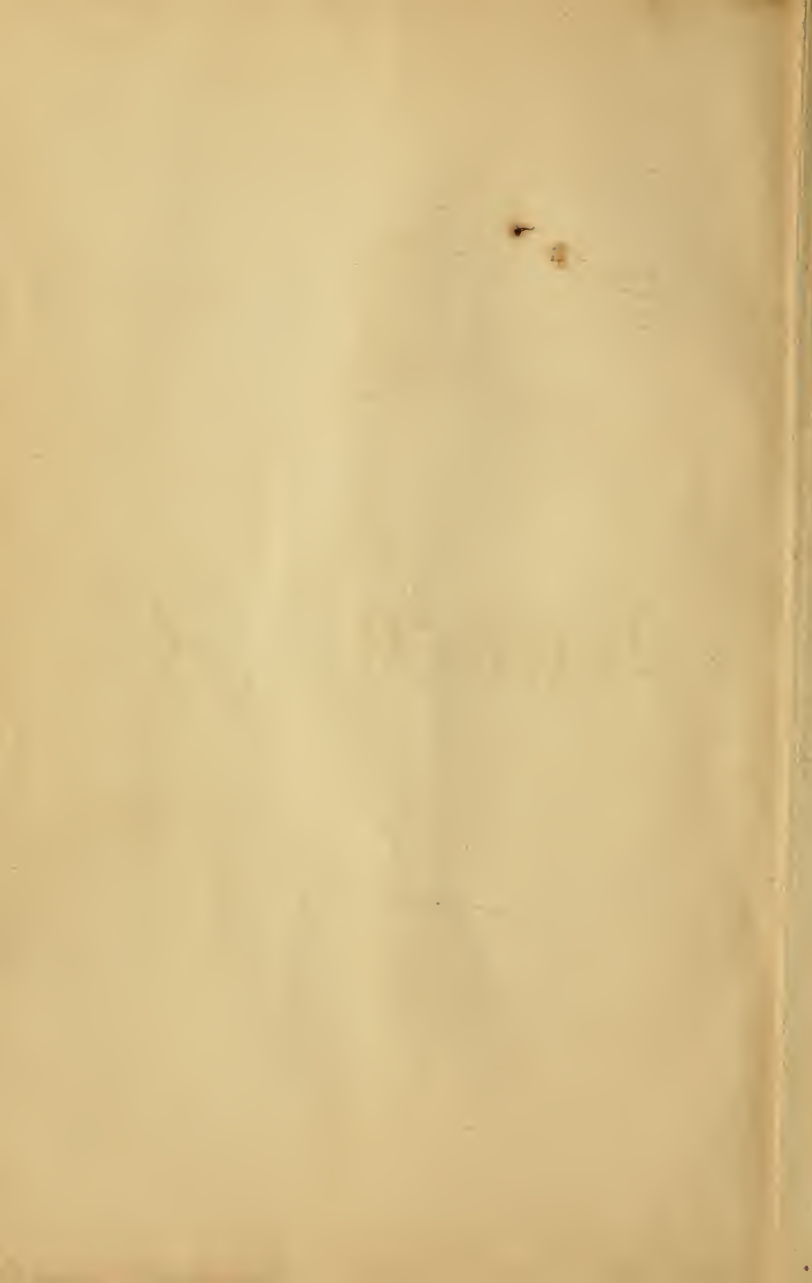
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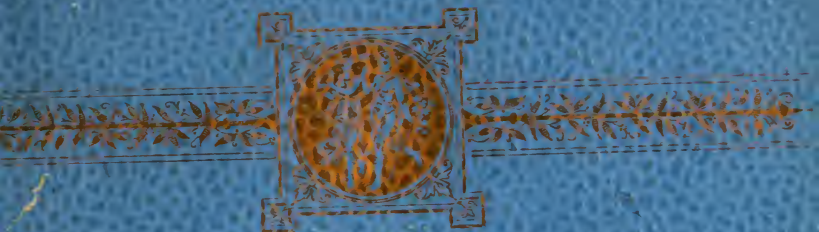
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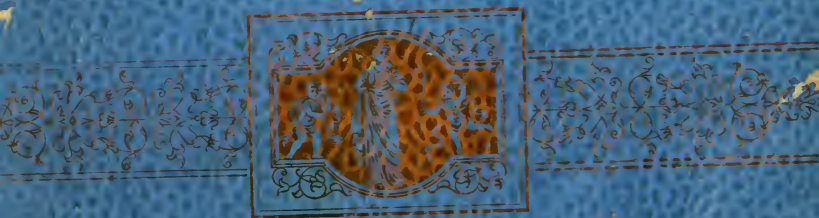


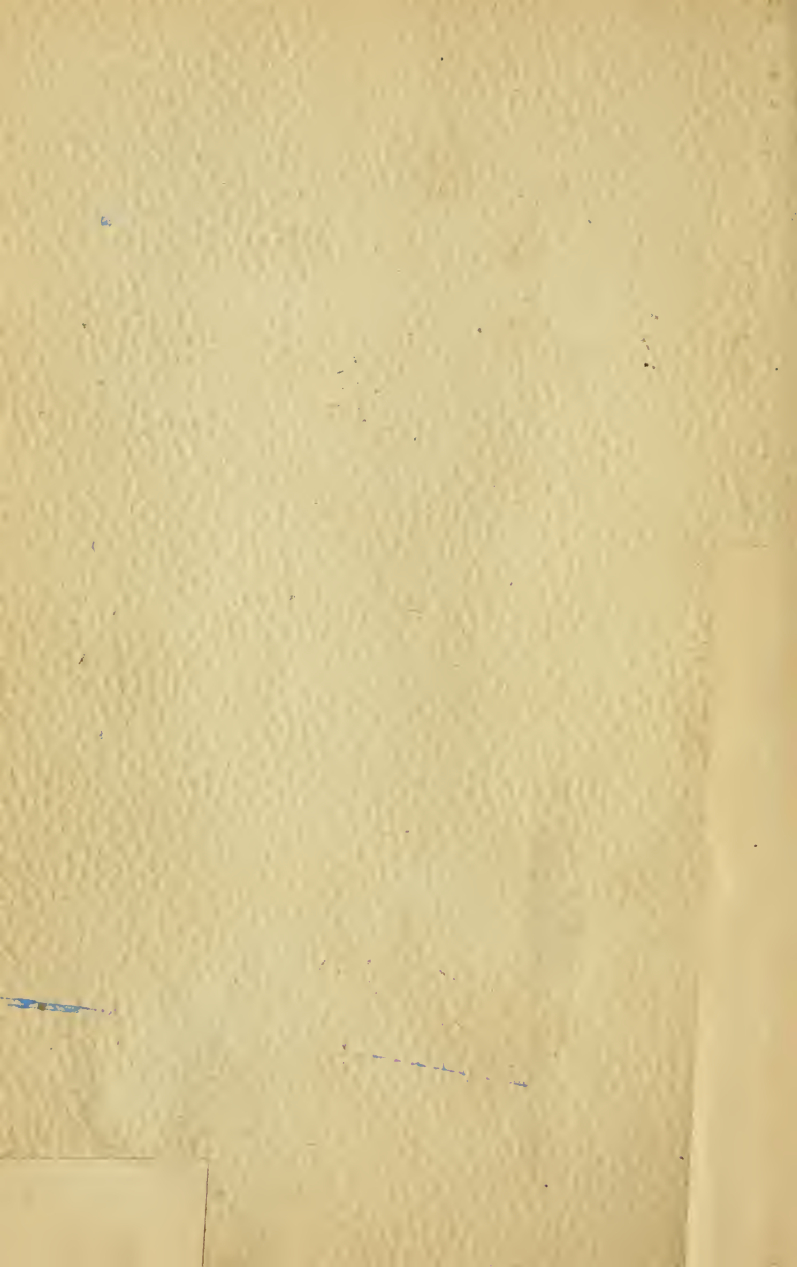
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Nancy Bet.



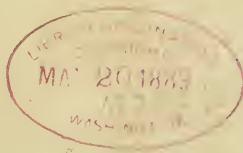


Nancy Bel

THE STORY OF SLOOMY PERKINS AND HIS
TRANSACTION IN REAL ESTATE.

Richard Lynch
By **R. L. GARNER.**

NORFOLK, VA.:
LANDMARK STEAM PRINTING HOUSE.
1889.



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Dedication.

These tender lines of solemn truth
I dedicate to age and youth—
A truthful tale of many lives,
Of scheming men and scolding wives.

THE AUTHOR.

NANCY BET.

I.

My neighbor was a fine old man,
Who owned a mill and lots of land;
He had a daughter, stout and fair,
With yellow eyes and pale red hair.
Her eyes were crossed, her mouth was crook'd,
You could not tell which way she looked :
She had some freckles on her face
Which chalk and starch could not erase,
And though she had a turn-up nose,
It looked no worse than you'd suppose.
She stood six feet on level ground
And weighed about two hundred pounds.
Her Christian name was Nancy Bet—
Methinks I see her figure yet!

II.

Now, Nancy used to grease her hair,
And paint her cheeks with paint and care :
Her teeth were few and badly snagged,
And out of line her cuspids straggled ;
Her gums were large, her lips were small,
She could not shut her mouth at all.

She had some warts upon her hand,
 But still, you see, the house and land ;
 And then, besides the land, you know,
 She could saw wood, and cook, and sew,
 And knit, and spin, and patch, and darn,
 And feed the pigs, and husk the corn,
 And pen the sheep, and milk the cow—
 Good Lord ! methinks I see her now !

III.

Now, Nancy boasted not a charm,
 Except the prospect of the farm,
 And she (the sole surviving heir)
 Would own it *all*, and not a *share*.
 For Nancy's mother now was dead,
 Her father was too old to wed,
 Besides, he suffered with the gout,
 And very seldom stirred about.
 Now, I believed, (I don't know why,)
 That soon the good old man would die ;
 I thought, as he complained so much,
 And had to use his cane and crutch,
 That if her pa were dead and gone,
 And Nancy left there all alone,
 Her tender heart, (as I mistrusted,)
 Might swell up until it "*busted*."
 Alas ! to think of her—a *girl*,
 Left all alone in this bad world,

To battle with misfortune's waves,
 And tussle with its scheming knaves,
 My pious pity knew no bounds—
 I feel her spirit hanging round !

IV.

Her father was infirm and old,
 And Winter coming, bleak and cold,
 I thought, in view of everything,
 The old man could not live till spring ;
 And seeing such a chance in life
 To get a home and have a wife,
 I chose the maxim, on the spot,
 Of "striking while the iron's hot;"
 So every little chance I saw
 I'd say, "Miss Nancy, how's your pa?"
 And Nancy Bet would always say—
 "Why, pap haint quite so well to-day."
 And then I got to dropping in
 To hear the old man chat and chin.
 He said it "kind o' cured the blues"
 For me to come and bring the news.
 Well, every time that I was there,
 It seemed that Nancy's eyes, and hair,
 And nose, and teeth, and size, and style
 Grew less offensive all the while.
 'Tis strange how we grow use to faces,
 But "circumstances alter cases;"
 And now "as I had brok'n the ice,"

And Nancy seemed to be so nice,
 It soon got so, at every call,
 I'd chat with Nancy in the hall.
 And in a week or fortnight more
 We'd chat a while outside the door ;
 And things progressed at this fair rate
 Until she'd see me out the gate.
 And while the midnight moments flew,
 We'd love, and hug, and kiss and coo,
 And coo, and kiss, and hug, and love,
 Until the blushing stars above
 Would crawl behind a cloud and laugh ;
 And yet, I haven't told you half.
 I loved her then and thought that she—
 Good sakes! her stalwart form I see!

 V.

The racket that I gave to Nance
 Would throw a statue in a trance—
 For weeks and weeks, day after day,
 I had rehearsed what I would say ;
 I had it fixed, and knew it all,
 And had it wound up like a ball ;
 The only trouble was to find
 The end from which it would unwind—
 To find the loose end of the thread
 To couple on to what she said :
 The trouble was in *starting in*,
 To find just where I could begin ;

I had it word by word correct,
 But somehow it would not connect ;
 And every time it failed to fit
 I'd add a few more lines to it,
 And thus it grew from day to day,
 Until it was too long to say.
 It would have taken days to write it,
 And seven hours to recite it ;
 And yet I felt if I could tell—
 Me thought I heard her warlike yell !

VI.

One Autumn night, when all was still,
 Except the water at the mill ;
 The stars were shining in the sky,
 The moon was full and so was I :
 I then resolved to say my lines ;
 I took her freckled hand in mine,
 And put one arm around the girl,
 And tried my little speech a whirl.
 She hung her head to hide her face :
 I pitched my voice to suit the case.
 I said "*My darling*," and I stopped,
 And in my tracks I nearly dropped ;
 She trembled, and she gave a sigh,
 I felt as though I'd surely die.
 I tried again—" *My darling pet*,
 "The sun of happiness has set
 "Upon my life, and not a star

“Reflects its glory from afar ;
“Until those ruby lips impart
“The healing to my lonely heart,
“And swear by all the stars that shine
“That you will be forever mine,
“Till you bestow that priceless boon,
“This life ain’t worth a picayune.”
She leaned her weight upon my arm,
And then I thought about the farm,
And with the burning thought inspired,
I didn’t think of getting tired.
“My angel, if this world were mine,
“And all the glowing stars that shine
“From heaven’s boundless shores of blue,
“I’d give them for a smile from you.
“If I could teach the little birds
“To twitter two angelic words,
“And make the angels sing the same,
“I’d teach them your seraphic name.
“If I could teach the little flowers
“To look like you, this world of ours
“Would be an Eden, where the breeze
“Should sigh for you among the trees,
“And I would mantle all its hills
“With buttercups and daffodils ;
“I’d kiss them all and chew their ear,
“And think of you, my angel dear.”
Again I thought about the farm,
My love grew more intensely warm—

"When I behold those angel eyes,
 "I think of heaven, where the skies
 "Are clondless, and my soul adores
 "The deity that rules those shores ;
 "The goddess who sits on that throne
 "Is you, my pet ; and you alone,
 "With those sweet lips, can seal my fate."
 She hung her chin upon the gate,
 And gave her chewing gum a twist;
 And then we cooed again and kissed.
 I leaned myself against the fence
 About a minute, in suspense ;
 Within which time she did decide
 That she would be my blushing bride ;
 She named the happy day, and then
 We hugged, and kissed, and cooed again.
 Now, when the preacher's part was done,
 He said that Nance and I were one—
 Which one it was, he did not say,
 But *she* decided that next day ;
 But I had won her heart and hand;
 And that, of course, embraced the land,
 And with the land the crop and mill—
 My sakes !—I think I've got a chill !

 VII.

Well, now, that Nance and I were wed,
 And soon her father would be dead,
 (Of course, we'd feel the dreadful loss)

I'd own the farm and be the boss.
 But when the Winter passed away
 Her father mended day by day,
 Until at last, (though strange to tell),
 His rheum and gout were sound and well.
 But Nancy's tender heart had grown
 As cold as ice and hard as stone;
 And all the while her temper grew
 From bad to worse until I knew
 That something must be done to stop—
 My stars! did you hear something drop?

VIII.

If you had seen her snatch the broom,
 And whirl the dust about the room,
 Or sling a chair across the floor,
 Or kick the dog or slam the door
 Until the shock would break the delf:
 And then she'd mutter to herself;
 I've seen her rage and storm with ire,
 Because she had to build the fire,
 And talk to me in words like these:
 "I wish to God that you would freeze!"
 And call me *brute* or *lazy sot*,
 And fling a skillet, pan or pot
 At me as though I'd been a post—
 Great lands! methinks I see her ghost!

IX.

Well, those few months of wedded life
 That I had spent in fear and strife,
 Convinced me that the years to come
 Would not be full of "*yum, yum, yum.*"
 She'd banged my eyes till they were black,
 And poured hot ashes down my back;
 She'd vow that she would break my neck,
 And make my frame a dismal wreck,
 Until my flesh in horror crawled,
 And then she'd swear she'd "*snatch me bald.*"
 One night she hit me with a board,
 And stormed around because I snored;
 "You good-for-nothing brute," she said,
 And kicked me sprawling out of bed.
 "I'd like to know how I can sleep
 "With such a racket as you keep:"
 Then drew the blanket snug and warm
 Around her own gigantic form,
 While I stood freezing, sorely hurt,
 With nothing on except my shirt.
 I slept thereafter in the barn,
 But Nancy didn't "care a darn."
 Oh, dreams of youth! could I forget—
 "Sit still, my heart,"—she's kicking yet.

X.

But things, you see, had got so bad
 That they began to make me mad;

And you can bet your socks that I'm
 A very "bad, bad man" at times.
 But now I saw the safest course
 I had before me was divorce,
 So I resolved to make the start
 If it should break my angel's heart.
 I had decided now to skip,
 Resolved at last to "let 'er rip,"
 So down the path across the meadow,
 And Nancy Bet was left a widow.
 While climbing o'er the outside fence,
 I paused a moment in suspense :
 I looked around with aching breast,
 And said, "Farewell! I'm going West."
 I thought if I were safe from harm,
 Some other fool could have the farm,
 The mill, the wife, and I'd rejoice—
 Sh—hush! I thought I heard her voice!

XI.

These weary years that I have I roamed,
 Without a friend, without a home ;
 The days, and weeks that I have spent
 Without a meal, without a cent,
 Have never caused me to forget
 My married life or Nancy Bet.
 And often now, when I'm in bed,
 I cover up my battered head,
 And fancy, in the midnight gloom,

The stovewood's flying round the room;
 And every night I am beset
 With dreams of hell and Nancy Bet.
 And often in my dreams I feel
 The gentle pressure of her heel.
 I feel at times as though I *must*—
 Great guns! did you hear something "*bust?*"

XII.

When she'd begin to rage and tear,
 A blizzard was a tame affair;
 You'd think a cyclone was a pet
 If once you lived with Nancy Bet.
 She stunned a vicious mule so quick
 He petrified and couldn't kick,
 I've seen her snap her teeth so hard
 The sparks would fly across the yard;
 But since she used to be my wife,
 I wouldn't tell to save your life,
 The half or tenth how awful bad
 It was when she was real mad;
 No loving husband ever cares
 'To talk about his home affairs,
 No matter what his darling does—
 I thought I heard a skillet buzz!

XIII.

Now this was forty years ago,
 (It lacks, perhaps, a month or so,)
 That Nancy Bet and I agreed

To bind ourselves in word and deed ;
And then, (as I have said before),
I thought, in two or three months more,
As sure as fate, with crutch and gout,
The old man would "step down and out,"
But Fortune is a fickle dame,
And oft has "Mis" before her name ;
And thus she flirts with great and small
And jilts her lovers, one and all.
The fickle wench ! I don't know when
I'll ever trust her smiles again.
I've felt the power of her charm,
And thought, one time, I owned a farm.
But since I broke the magic spell
I find that love is like a shell—
If you will hold it to your ear
A moment you'll distinctly hear
A sound from out its cavern pour,
You'll think you hear the ocean roar,
But siren-like its sound decoys,
There's nothing in it but a noise.
And spoony lovers as a rule
Will play the knave and act the fool,
And look each other in the eyes
And swear to forty-thousand lies.
But since that night my horrid fate
Was fixed by Nancy at the gate,
I find that fools are thick as hops,
And every year renews the crop.
I'm only one—and not the worst—

It only happened I was first,
 But seven more the same have done,
 They've courted Nancy one by one,
 And one by one have all been forced
 To skip the bond and be divorced,
 And I will tell you why it is—
 By jings! did you hear something whiz?

 XIV.

I wonder when I get to heaven
 If I will meet the other seven.
 I often wonder if it's true
 That Nance will be an angel too,
 And have a pair of golden wings,
 And have a harp, and try to sing;
 If so, you'll see the saints retire,
 She'll run the ranch and boss the choir.
 And I expect on judgment morn
 To see her snatch old Gabriel's horn,
 And give it such an awful blow
 'Twill rouse the dead in Jericho;
 And if old Gabriel interfere
 She'll break his horn and pull his ear;
 And such a tempest she will raise!
 The wind will blow for forty days,
 While she will storm, and cuss, and swear—
 Great Scott! did you hear something tear?

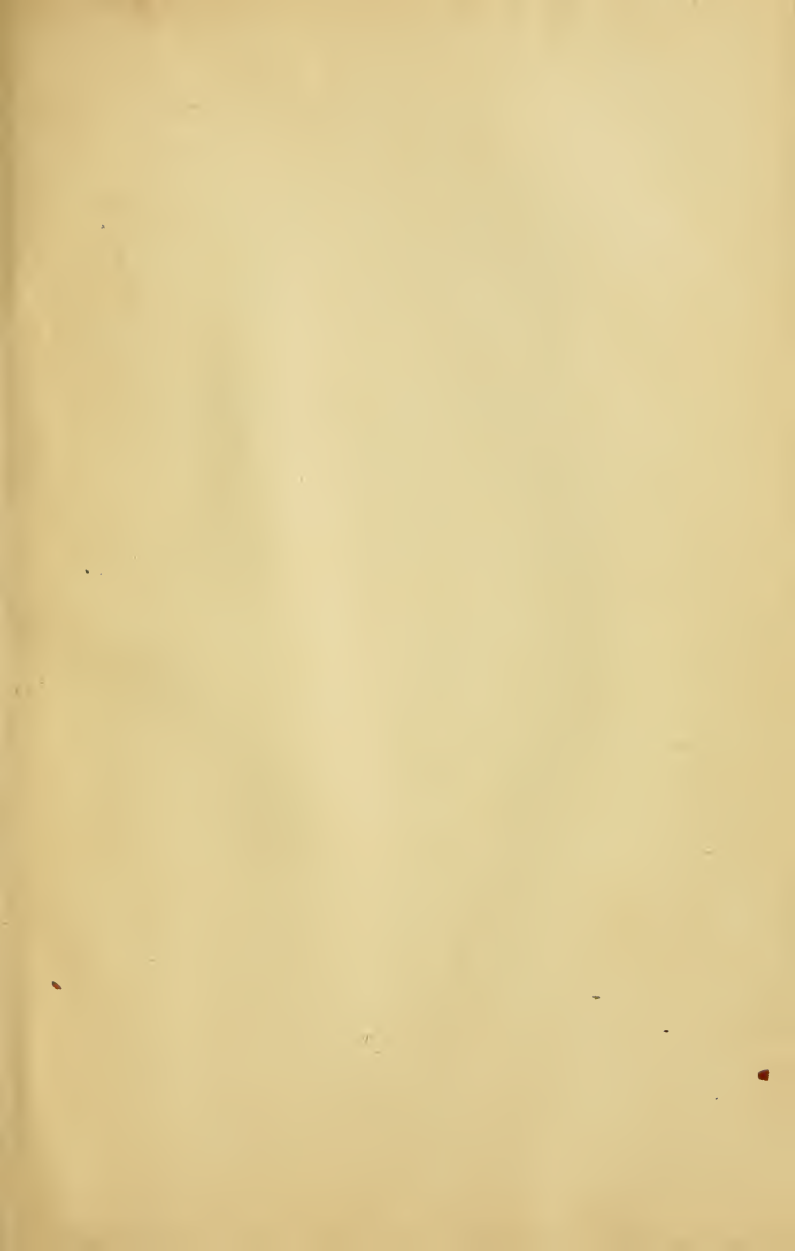
 XV.

When Nancy climbs the golden stairs

And finds her husbands all up there,
 I wonder what she'll think to see
 That hen-pecked host forever free
 From bonds of wedlock made of breath,
 And guaranteed to wear till death.
 I'll bet two dollars and a half
 That not a one of them will laugh,
 And every angel of that band
 Will swear he didn't want the land :
 And if she troubles our affairs
 We'll toddle down the golden stairs.
 If she's allowed to snort and fuss
 Then heaven is no place for us.
 There never was an angel yet
 Could live in peace with Nancy Bet.
 No angel ever had the pluck—
 Great stars! the lightning! am I struck?

 XVI.

I think a chapter of advice
 Will do you good, and may suffice
 To make you bend your manly arm,
 If you should ever want a farm ;
 Don't marry one, for if you do,
 Your wife will throw it up to you ;
 But if you ever wed at all,
 No matter if your means are small,
 Support yourself, and don't depend
 On father, mother, wife, or friend ;
 I tried it once—don't you forget,
 And that old man is living yet,
 And Nancy Bet, the red-haired wonder—
 Ye gods! but did you hear it thunder?





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